



CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE COST ESTIMATE

March 19, 2007

H.R. 327 **Joshua Omvig Veterans Suicide Prevention Act**

*As ordered reported by the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs
on March 15, 2007*

H.R. 327 would require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs (VA) to develop and implement a comprehensive program to reduce the incidence of suicide among veterans. This bill would require that the program have specific components, including training for all staff who interact with veterans, annual screenings of veterans for risk factors for suicide, a suicide prevention counselor at each medical facility, and outreach and education for veterans and their families.

According to VA, most of those requirements are already in place or will be implemented before the end of the year. For example, training seminars have recently begun for all employees and peer-support groups are a regular facet of veterans' rehabilitation centers. Annual screenings for suicide risk factors such as depression and alcohol abuse are routinely performed by primary care physicians. Two medical centers are focused on research and education about suicide and its prevention. In addition, VA works with other medical providers in the community to reach veterans who may not use the VA health care system. VA also plans to hire suicide-prevention professionals at each of its hospitals. The bill would authorize VA to create a toll-free hotline staffed by mental health personnel, and the agency is currently considering the feasibility of doing this.

CBO estimates, therefore, that implementing this bill would have little, if any, cost because VA already has or soon will implement all the specific requirements of the bill. Enacting the bill would not affect direct spending or receipts.

H.R. 327 contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act and would not affect the budgets of state, local, or tribal governments.

The CBO staff contact for this estimate is Michelle S. Patterson. This estimate was approved by Robert A. Sunshine, Assistant Director for Budget Analysis.